

Michigan  
Department  
of Human  
Services

Prepared by the  
DHS Office of  
Communications  
(517) 373-7394

# Articles in Today's Clips

**Tuesday, June 17, 2008**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

---

TOPIC	PAGE
*Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-7
Domestic Violence	8-9
Juvenile Justice	10
Food Assistance	11-12
Child Support	13
Education	14-15
Health Care	16-17

## Investigators probe deaths of two infants in Van Buren County

Posted by [scrone](#) June 17, 2008 10:30AM

SOUTH HAVEN -- [Michigan State Police](#) are investigating the deaths of two infants in less than a month in Van Buren County, including a full-term baby girl whose body was found in a garbage bag in the basement of a South Haven rental house, authorities said.

As required by law, police also are looking at two other infant deaths not considered to be suspicious.

The four deaths, which are not related, were reported separately April 13 and May 6 to state police and on May 4 and June 3 to Bangor police.

State police investigators said Monday they plan to submit their investigations of the newborn's death and the death of a 5-month-old boy to the Van Buren County Prosecutor's Office for review and possible criminal charges, pending final autopsy reports in both cases. The deaths reported in Bangor will be reviewed by the prosecutor's office, but are not considered suspicious, Bangor Police Chief Gary Baker said this morning.

Information about the four cases was first given to the Kalamazoo Gazette on Monday.

In the May 6 incident, the stepfather of a 23-year-old South Haven woman came to the state police post in South Haven and told troopers he had found something "gruesome," Detective Sgt. Diane Oppenheim said. Oppenheim said police later found the body of an infant girl in a trash bag in the basement of a rental home.

Oppenheim declined to release the address of the house where the baby was found. The baby, who was later named Emma Ruby-Lynn Smith, was delivered April 1 and had been in the basement at least a month before the woman's mother found the baby while cleaning up the house for the spring and summer months, she said.

Oppenheim said police are awaiting the results of a final autopsy and toxicology tests before submitting the suspicious-death case to the prosecutor's office and possible criminal charges against the baby's mother. So far, state police have found that the baby's mother, whose name has not been released, had hidden the pregnancy from her parents and delivered the baby at their home before taking it to the rental property where she lived, Oppenheim said.

The woman initially told police the baby was stillborn and Oppenheim said the woman hid the pregnancy from her parents because she was afraid if they learned of it, they and the [Michigan Department of Human Services](#) would try to curtail her recent efforts to regain custody of her 14-month-old son.

Oppenheim said the woman hid that she was pregnant with the boy and attempted to put him up for adoption after his birth, but DHS intervened because of circumstances the sergeant declined to discuss in detail. The woman's parents now have guardianship of the boy, she said.

Less than a month before the discovery of the newborn's body, state police responded to a report of a dead 5-month-old boy in Covert Township, Lt. John Slenk said.

Slenk said the investigation by state troopers has shown Zachery T. Branson laid for six to seven hours alone without any "parental attendance" before his death April 13. Police began investigating after responding at about 4:50 p.m. to a residence on 62nd Street in Geneva Township and are awaiting the results of an autopsy and toxicology tests before submitting the case to prosecutors for any possible charges against the baby's parents, the lieutenant said.

Slenk said the circumstances of the case are in "the abuse arena," although police said they found no broken bones or visible physical injuries to the boy.

Baker said the two infant deaths in Bangor involved a 4-month-old girl who was found dead May 4 when a parent checked on her during a nap and a premature 2-week-old boy with medical issues who was found dead on June 3 by his mother who checked on him that morning.

Baker said police will submit their investigations to the prosecutor's office, but found no signs of abuse in either case or "anything suspicious."

Van Buren County Chief Assistant Prosecutor Keith Robinson said his office is aware of the two state police cases, but has yet to receive any information about infant deaths in Bangor.

The two reports of infant deaths to state police in April and May were "unusual," Robinson said, given that they occurred "within a short period of time."

"It's alarming any time you have something happen, but ... I wouldn't necessarily say that I see a trend."

Contact Rex Hall Jr. at [rhall@kalamazoogazette.com](mailto:rhall@kalamazoogazette.com) or 388-7784

Categories: [Breaking News](#)

## Comments

Footer

## Convicted sex offender gets movie theater ban as part of probation

Posted by Bryn Mickle | The Flint Journal June 16, 2008 22:11PM

**FLINT, Michigan** -- A convicted sex offender won't be buying any movie tickets for the next three years.

Genesee Circuit Judge Richard B. Yuille on Monday banned Al-Hajj M.A. Salaam, 64, of Mt. Morris, from going to movie theaters as part of his probation for fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Salaam was arrested last June after police said he rubbed his groin against three 12-year girls watching "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End" at the Clio Cinema in Vienna Township.

The girls were sitting at the front of the theater when Salaam approached them in the dark, slinking low in a seat and contorting onto them. Investigators said the petrified girls ran to their parents, who were watching the movie from farther back in the theater.

Salaam pleaded guilty but mentally ill in the case and faced the possibility of three years in prison at Monday's sentencing. Yuille sentenced him to three years probation, which included the movie theater ban.

Yuille called Salaam's conduct "despicable," but noted that the Vietnam War veteran had served his country and does well with treatment for his mental illness.

Both the prosecutor and the defense attorney agreed that the sentence is unique but said it fits the crime.

"The sentence was just," said Salaam's attorney, Arthur A. Busch, adding he had never heard of such a moviegoing ban as a probation condition during his 12 years as Genesee County prosecutor.

Genesee County Prosecutor David S. Leyton also said it sounded fair.

"The judge shaped (the sentence) to the nature of the offense," said Leyton.

Under Yuille's terms, the diagnosed schizophrenic he must continue with treatment and take his required medication.

Salaam's attorney, Arthur A. Busch, said the movie incident happened after Salaam went off his medication while attending a wedding overseas.

Salaam apparently experiences hallucinations when not on his medication.

He has a history of indecent exposure and fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct dating back to 1984.

If he goes off his medication again or stops treatment, Salaam faces the possibility of prison. He must also comply with the state sex offender registry.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

# Teacher guilty of sex with student

FREE PRESS NEWS SERVICE • June 17, 2008

After less than two hours deliberation, a jury found former Plymouth Christian Academy teacher Stephanie Ann Stein guilty of having sex with a former student, who was 15 when their relationship began.

The 32-year-old Canton woman was found guilty of two counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct, both 15-year felonies, one count of using the Internet to communicate with a minor to commit a crime, a four-year felony, and one count of distributing obscene material of a sexual nature to a minor, which is a two-year felony.

Stein's sentencing will take place July 2 in Wayne County Circuit Court.

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

## **Detroit**

### **Teenager testifies in teacher sex case**

#### **Doug Guthrie / The Detroit News**

**DETROIT** -- A jury will hear closing arguments today in the trial of a former eighth-grade English teacher at Plymouth Christian Academy who is charged with having a sexual affair with a 15-year-old former student.

Stephanie Stein was the married mother of two young children and more than twice his age, but he pursued her. And last summer, he told friends they would have children together.

Stein faces the possibility of 15 years in prison. Under state law, there is no such thing as consensual sex with anyone under 16.


When first questioned last fall by authorities after his mother became suspicious about the relationship, the youth protected Stein, saying he forced her into having sex. After a preliminary exam in February in 35th District Court in Plymouth, he sent her flowers.

But his feelings turned to anger in the following months, and his story was far different on the witness stand Monday in Wayne Circuit Court.

"I never made a huge big effort to pursue her. I went and saw her a lot and talked to her a lot," the now 16-year-old Canton Township resident said.

Judge Craig Strong barred the media from taking pictures of the teenager or publishing his last name. The youth testified that although no media have identified him, friends and their parents figured out who was involved and ordered their children to stay away from him. Stein's lawyer, Todd Flood, told jurors the youth lied to Stein and manipulated her. Flood introduced e-mail and instant messages allegedly sent by the youth that contained angry threats against Stein's husband and eventually against Stein and even Flood.

The youth said he believed Stein had been abused by her husband and he wanted to take care of her. Stein and her husband are getting a divorce, Flood said.





# Grand Blanc Township man in serious condition after he is hit by car in domestic dispute

Posted by Beata Mostafavi | The Flint Journal June 17, 2008 08:31AM

**GRAND BLANC TOWNSHIP, Michigan --** A Grand Blanc Township man was in serious condition this morning after a woman struck him with her car about 3:30 a.m. after a domestic dispute.

After a fight, the 23-year-old man allegedly got a shotgun and followed a Flint woman out of a Maple Brook apartment at Maple and Fenton roads, Grand Blanc Township police Capt. Jude Rariden said.

There was an altercation and the gun discharged, striking a tire of the woman's car. The woman then tried to flee and hit him with her vehicle.

He was taken to Hurley Medical Center. No other information was released this morning.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



## Jury seated for Dena Thompson's trial in death of ex-husband Troy Tyo

Posted by [llupo](#) June 17, 2008 03:54AM



Dena Thompson

ALLEGAN — Opening arguments start Tuesday morning in the Dena "Winky" Thompson murder case after a jury was seated late this afternoon.

Thompson, 38, is accused of murder in the stabbing death of he ex-husband, Troy Tyo, 36, in December. Police say she persuaded her husband, Kristofer Thompson, to carry out the deed because of a child custody dispute.

Prosecutors and defense attorney David Dodge picked the jury from a pool of about 160 people.

A heavy police presence was around the Allegan County Courthouse today during the jury pick.

Categories:

### Comments

Footer

## Wayland students charged for videotaped beating

Posted by [The Grand Rapids Press](#) June 16, 2008  
12:29PM

WAYLAND -- Charges have been authorized against two Wayland Union High School students accused of attacking a classmate at school last week, according to Wayland Police Chief Dan Miller.

The cases will be handled in Allegan County Juvenile Court, where a hearing date will be set, he said. Each girl will face one count of aggravated assault, which carries a maximum penalty of one year in a juvenile detention center and a \$1,000 fine.

Because the two alleged attackers are younger than 18, the FBI did not investigate potential hate crime violations.

The freshmen girls, who can be seen repeatedly punching the 14-year-old victim in a clip recorded on another student's digital camera Tuesday, said they did not agree with her advocacy for gay rights, police said.

---

### RELATED STORY

- [Police: Teens' attack on Wayland classmate was planned](#)



June 17, 2008

## Destroyed crops may have 'gigantic implications'

Corn costs up 11%; 1.3 million acres in Iowa lost in floods

*Tim Jones*  
MCT News Service

CHICAGO - Get ready for food prices to shoot up again.

Even though disaster assistance workers will have to wait for high water to subside across millions of acres in Iowa before assessing the damage from the state's worst flooding in more than a half-century, the numbers linked to lost crops are already coming in, creating their own flood-like pressure on food price inflation.

The bushel price of September corn, which had already reached record levels, jumped another 11 percent last week, fueled in part by news that 10 percent of Iowa's corn crop-about 1.3 million acres-has been lost to flooding or the inability to plant because of poor weather. Soybean losses, according to the Iowa Farm Bureau, are about 20 percent, or about 2 million acres.

It's too soon to say what the price impact will be, according to analysts, but dramatic production cuts in two key commodities increase the likelihood that consumers will be paying more for milk, meat, bread and poultry. Perhaps a lot more.

"Given the flooding we see today, we're likely to see prices go significantly higher based on the weather," said Chad Hart, an agriculture economist at Iowa State University.

"This is a significant event. We were already having production issues before this occurred, all across the Midwest. This can have gigantic implications," Hart said.

Some of that anticipated price increase has already been factored into the price of corn, which was about \$6 a bushel at the end of May but has since shot up to \$7.46 a bushel, according to the Chicago Board of Trade.

"This is not just a short-term problem," said Joe Victor, vice president/marketing for Allendale Inc.

Nor is it one that can be blamed solely on the extraordinary flooding in Iowa. Rising world demand for food commodities, a shift to produce ethanol from corn and a swooning American dollar gave birth to stunning increases in corn prices. Worldwide, commodity prices were 43 percent higher in April than a year earlier, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

## Pressures accelerated

Price pressures accelerated when the spring planting across the Midwest - especially in Indiana and Illinois - was delayed because of cold and wet weather. Before the flooding, the U.S. Department of Agriculture last week reduced its forecast for corn production, adding more pressure. The USDA report said 89 percent of the corn crop had sprouted, below the five-year average of 95 percent. The later the corn is planted, the more susceptible it is to heat damage in the summer.

The flooding made it worse. And when barge traffic on the Mississippi River was shut down Thursday, stopping grain deliveries, that aggravated the situation further.

## No limit in sight

Now analysts who said they could never envision corn selling for \$7 a bushel say they wouldn't be surprised to see it reach \$8 or \$9 a bushel, perhaps higher.

"This was already a difficult spring," said Dave Miller, director of research and commodity services for the Iowa Farm Bureau. "This ranks up in the top two or three most disrupted years in corn and soybean production."

Crop 'under stress'

There may be some temporary relief, particularly with pork and beef prices, Miller said. If livestock producers choose to take hogs and cattle to slaughter rather than pay the higher price for corn to feed their animals, that could bring the price down, Miller said. But over the long term, inflationary pressures will prevail.

"The crop is already under stress. ... We need the weather to turn around because the clock is running against us," Victor said.

---



# Friend of the Court amnesty program ends; now search for deadbeats begins

Posted by Bryn Mickle | The Flint Journal June 16, 2008 21:23PM

**FLINT, Michigan** -- A last-minute rush of parents behind on their child support payments made it in under Monday's deadline for Genesee County's amnesty program.

In all, about 180 parents took advantage of the five-week program between Mother's and Father's Day, that allowed people to come in and discuss their cases without threat of arrest.

No final dollar figures were available Monday, but it likely didn't put much of a dent in the overall unpaid child support tally which totaled about \$682 million last year.

Still, Friend of the Court Jack Battles was encouraged by those who took advantage of the amnesty.

"Some folks are just reluctant to come in ... we can assist them and work something out," said Battles.

A few people who came in, however, left disappointed.

"They thought (amnesty) meant they could get rid of their debt," said Battles.

There were also a number of people who mistakenly thought they had warrants.

The overall goal, however, was the same -- get parents involved in the system again.  
"I'll do everything in my power not to arrest them," said Battles.

But that doesn't mean he won't resort to jail.

With the amnesty program over, Battles now turns his attention to the harsher phase.

The county has federal grant money that will allow the Friend of the Court to pick up more people wanted on bench warrants.

Battles met with area police chiefs two weeks ago and is finalizing plans on how best to spend that grant money.

"We will go out and start finding people," he said.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Tuesday, June 17, 2008

## Faith and Policy

# Stopping dropouts starts in the home

**Anthony B. Bradley**

More than 1.23 million high school seniors will fail to graduate in the class of 2008, according to a new study conducted by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. Now that the drama over the Democratic nominee has subsided, the presidential candidates must return to issues that threaten to hobble America in a global economy: namely, millions of future adults who are not acquiring the skill sets that will enable them to compete.

Results for the class of 2005, the most recent year available, show a national graduation rate of nearly 71 percent, an increase of about half a percentage point over the prior year. According to the report, that figure drops for historically disadvantaged groups: 58 percent for Hispanics, 55 percent for African-Americans and 51 percent for Native Americans. Males in these groups fare especially poorly.

Iowa, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Vermont lead the nation with graduation rates of more than 80 percent. The District of Columbia, Georgia, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico and South Carolina lag the nation with rates under 60 percent. Michigan is practically at the national average at 70.5 percent, but ranks 48th in the country for graduating African-Americans.

What reports overlook, and the political rhetoric during the presidential campaign will miss, is that high school graduation rates are tied to a stable family life, a sense of self-efficacy and moral maturity, rather than to money spent per pupil or the number of standardized assessments given from kindergarten through grade 12.

Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school as their classmates who live with two parents. Children whose fathers are absent consistently score lower than the norm in reading and math tests.

When I taught high school, I noticed students from the most stable families and loving communities usually were the most successful. Some of my brightest students were not free to perform well because of chaos at home. Kids from abusive homes and children of divorced or absentee parents did not normally perform well regardless of aptitude. I had students who regularly received low marks but would score high on aptitude and IQ tests.

A child is more effective in school when he or she believes his or her life has meaning and that he or she can make a difference. What better incentive to learn about the world and learn a skill set than the knowledge that someday one will make a contribution to making the world a better place?

Materialism and consumption eventually fail to provide incentives for struggling kids to persevere. A high school student who is depressed, abusing drugs, suicidal and nihilistic couldn't care less about the threat of "flipping burgers" for life.

A child must have a moral maturity to make good decisions in his or her long-term interests. This is helped by the wise counsel of parents and other supportive adults and peers. Struggling adolescents whose decisions sabotage their own progress will not make it.

Regardless of race or class, education reform will only be successful in concert with other needed reforms. Family, self-efficacy and morality work in concert like one of Bach's Brandenburg concertos.

We have more than 1 million annual reasons to stop playing rhetorical political games and ignoring that educational success is forged outside of the classroom.

*Anthony B. Bradley, who has a theology doctorate, is a research fellow for the Acton Institute in Grand Rapids. E-mail comments to [letters@detnews.com](mailto:letters@detnews.com).*

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080617/OPINION01/806170309>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.



Tuesday, June 17, 2008

# Let seniors control Medicare's exploding expenses

**John R. Graham**

This year, Medicare will begin paying out more in benefits than it collects in payroll taxes. If trends continue, the so-called trust fund will bust by 2019. This is all according to the Medicare Board of Trustees, who recently warned that the "projected long run program costs are not sustainable under current financing arrangements."

Medicare is on a collision course for one simple reason: Its payment model.

And the first step in fixing Medicare -- despite what we hear from Republicans and Democrats alike -- is to change that model.

Right now, Medicare subsidizes the supply of health care by paying providers directly. And the program's pricing system dates back to 1983, when officials surveyed thousands of physicians to determine the time and effort needed to perform various medical tasks.

This was little but financial alchemy.

Consider just one example. Medicare's economists concluded that a hysterectomy takes twice as much time as a psychotherapy session, 3.8 times as much mental effort, 4.47 times as much technical skill and physical effort, and 4.24 times as much risk. Add it all up, and a hysterectomy is 4.99 times as much work as a psychotherapy session -- at least according to the government.

Just about every possible procedure, treatment and appointment was calculated similarly. That's how the government determined the prices it would pay under Medicare.

Unsurprisingly, health care providers became really good at exploiting this system. To increase their incomes, providers simply needed to lobby Congress to ramp up Medicare spending.

Today, health care providers are some of the most powerful lobbyists in Washington.

To rescue Medicare's cascading finances, the government should subsidize health care demand. Currently, seniors have no say over how their Medicare money is spent. If seniors could control their own purse strings, they'd likely not stand for health care providers' exploding costs.

For purposes of analogy, think about one of the most popular senior pastimes, golf.

Right now, the golf industry markets itself directly to seniors. Courses tout their lush greens and comfortable carts. Club makers advertise the forgiveness of their clubs or how far they'll hit the ball. Once they've sold you on the golf, resorts market their spas, restaurants, and hotel rooms.



Now imagine if golf were a government entitlement. We'll call it "Medicare Part G."

If Congress subsidized the demand for golf, things wouldn't be much different. Sure, there'd be more seniors playing -- but the industry would still have to compete for customers.

If Congress instead subsidized the supply of golf -- paying golf courses and club makers for giving seniors the opportunity to enjoy the sport -- the industry's behavior would change overnight.

With Congress as its customer, "Big Golf" would hire a boatload of lobbyists to convince lawmakers about the benefits of the game. Club makers would vie for time at congressional hearings to call for full funding of their new graphite-shafted drivers. Citing the rising cost of grass seed or a sudden influx of Canadian geese, courses would demand more money year after year.

Left out of this debate, of course, would be the most important party -- the golfers. The same can be said of Medicare.

Seniors are captive to the compromises reached by Congress and healthcare providers. Indeed, seniors aren't even allowed to avoid the Medicare morass by funding their healthcare expenses independently through health savings accounts -- it's illegal.

Unlike any other marketplace, healthcare consumers -- that is, ordinary seniors -- have no control over the prices they pay.

Until Congress recognizes that subsidizing the supply of health care only forces its price ever higher, Medicare will be doomed to bankruptcy.

Returning Medicare dollars to the folks that use them will help to get Medicare's finances out of the sand trap and drive down healthcare costs for everyone.

*John R. Graham is director of health care studies at the Pacific Research Institute in San Francisco. Please e-mail comments to [letters@detnews.com](mailto:letters@detnews.com).*

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080617/OPINION01/806170311>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.